8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

[ca. 1850]

Women who dressed thousands of robes for the fur trade each year also prepared hairy buffalo robes for the winter overclothing and bedding of their own families. Robes were cut up to make hair-lined mittens, winter caps with ear flaps, winter moccasins, and ceremonial headdresses.

Soft-dressed buffalo skins without the hair were used for lodge covers and linings, for pad saddles, and for winding sheets for the dead. The smoke-softened upper portions of old, worn lodge covers were salvaged, cut up, and reused for breechclouts and items of winter clothing—men's and boys' shirts, women's and girls' dresses, and leggings for both sexes. The thinner skins of buffalo calves were made into tobacco pouches and winter underpants worn by girls and women.

Buffalo horns made practical powder flasks for Blackfoot warriors. Horns were also fashioned into spoons, cups, and ladles. The long, shaggy hair of the head, beard, and shoulders was braided into rope halters and bridles. Hair supplied the soft stuffing for pad saddles and balls used in games. Hair ornaments hung from lodges, headdresses, and war clubs. The buffalo's tail also was used for tipi ornaments. Mounted on a stick, the tail served as a fly brush. Buffalo hoofs strung on rawhide cords made noisy rattles. The scrotum of a bull provided a durable stirrup cover. The Blackfoot Indians derived their best glue from a bull's phallus, cut into small pieces and boiled.

No less useful were many of the internal parts of this animal. Buffalo sinew supplied thread for sewing and a strong, flat cord for binding heads and feathers to arrowshafts. Bow strings and bow backings were both of twisted bull sinew. The brains, liver, and fat were rubbed into hides to soften them during the skin-dressing process. Buffalo fat also was used to polish stone tobacco pipes and to mix with earth pigments to provide an oily base for paints. A yellow paint could be obtained from the buffalo's gallstone. Water buckets were made from the paunch, and the bladder was used as a bag for marrow grease.

The boss rib of a buffalo made a serviceable tool for straightening arrowshafts. A series of curved ribbones furnished the runners for a boy's sled.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

[ca. 1850]

which would show when the cases were in use. She did not bother to paint the backs, which would be hidden from view. 281

She used willow sticks for rulers in laying out the decorative fields, and as straight edges in painting the outlines of the geometric designs. She first outlined all the painted forms in a single color. Then she filled in the larger areas of the composition with the desired colors. Some women mixed their paints with hot water, which caused them to sink into the damp hide and become permanently fixed after the hide dried. Others applied to all the painted areas an overcoat of sticky glue, made by boiling the tail of a beaver or the clean, second-scrapings of buffalo hides. This thin coat of sizing gave the colors a glossy appearance. 415 532 [386] [381]

After the paint dried, the craftswoman turned the rawhide over and removed the hair with a hide-scraper or a rock. Pounding the opposite side with a rock whitened the unpainted portions of the rawhide and made the colors stand out from the background. Finally, the woman cut the parfleches to their desired shapes with a sharp knife, folded them into envelope form, and burned the tie holes with a heated iron rod. The parfleches were finished.

Areas of rawhide remaining after the parfleches were cut out were not wasted. They were used for smaller containers or for resoles in repairing moccasins. Women made other rawhide cases in rectangular or cylindrical form and painted them. Those intended to hold sacred objects were decorated with long, cut-rawhide fringes. 281 415

Men made shields and drums of rawhide. To make a shield, the thick hide of a buffalo bull's neck was placed over a fire in the ground so that it would shrink and become still thicker and tougher. It was trimmed into a circular form about eighteen inches in diameter. Men painted on their shields sacred symbols such as buffalo, the sun, the moon, and stars, which they believed would protect them from their enemies' bullets and arrows. The belly hide of a horse was preferred for drumheads. It would not soften or stretch out of shape. To tighten a drumhead, they held it near a fire. Paintings on drums were also of sacred character. 281 [532] [151] 281 534 [532]

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

bowls were made in different sizes. The walls of some of them were less than three-eighths of an inch thick. These wooden utensils served for soup and serving bowls, dishes, and drinking cups.

Even though Blackfoot warriors had been carrying firearms for more than a century, the bow and arrow was still their favorite buffalo-hunting weapon. The flint arrowhead had been superseded by one of hoop iron, which the Blackfeet called "wide rope." A barrel hoop from one to two inches wide could be obtained from traders in exchange for a buffalo robe. The Indian arrowhead maker drove an old axe head into the ground and used its top surface for an anvil. He cut out the arrowheads from the hoop iron with a sharp chisel and sharpened their edges with a file. Completed arrowheads were either rounded or square-shouldered, in accordance with the maker's preference. They measured about two and one-half inches long. An expert could fashion fifty or sixty metal arrowheads in a day.

Arrowshafts were of sarvis berry, about five hands and two fingers long, measured fist over fist as we would do in choosing sides in a baseball game. Three feathers of the eagle, hawk, crow, or goose were attached to the rear of the shaft with sinew wrapping. The arrowhead was fitted into a slot in the front of the shaft and bound with sinew. To hold the sinew wrapping in place, the portions of the shaft to be wrapped were lightly scored with a knife, and a glue made from boiled pieces of buffalo phallus was applied to these areas with a stick. Arrow makers could tell their finished products by minor differences in construction, as well as by the number, widths, and colors of painted stripes under the feathering.

A length of chokecherry about the thickness of a man's wrist was the preferred wood for bowmaking. It was carefully shaved with a knife and bent to a proper double-curve while the wood was still green by tying it at each end and in the center to a sturdy pole and driving wooden pegs between bow and pole midway between each of the ties. In three or four days the bow dried out sufficiently to hold its shape. The bow was backed with sinew, which was glued in place with buffalo-phallus glue.

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

hide of the buffalo calf. The belly of the horse furnished the preferred drumhead substance.[66] In my informants' youth older people skinned and tanned the hide of a year old colt that had died for use as a medicine bundle wrapping. They believed this wrapping would bring them luck in acquiring horses.

USE OF HORSEHAIR

Maximilian (1833) observed Blackfoot use of horsehair "dyed of various colors," as well as human hair, for decorative fringes of men's dress suits (Maximilian, 1906, vol. 23, p. 101). Short Face said the hair of the mane was preferred for these trimmings. The asperger used for shaking water on hot rocks to produce steam in the Blackfoot sweat lodge was made of a horse's tail bound to a wooden handle (fig. 30, *a*). Horse tails served as tipi decorations only if the owner "dreamed" of them as part of the ornament of his lodge. Informants claimed that horsehair ropes were late introductions among the Blackfoot, although they were common among the Plateau tribes in earlier times (p. 75).

HORSE-CHESTNUT PERFUME

The callosity from the inside of the horse's leg, known as the chestnut, was cut away, powdered, and mixed with powdered plant materials to make a perfume which was rubbed on clothing to give it a pleasant odor.[67]

HORSE-TOOTH NECKLACES

Maximilian (1906, vol. 23, p. 100) observed Blackfoot use of horse teeth as necklaces. Short Face said some men believed it would bring them luck and good health to wear a necklace of horse or elk teeth.

USE OF HORSE HOOFS

The Blackfoot did not make glue from horses' hoofs. Their favorite glue, much used in making bows and arrows, came from the boiled phallus of a buffalo bull. In the collections of the Museum of the Plains Indian is a horse hoof, painted, and strung as a neck pendant worn by a weather dancer in the Piegan medicine lodge (fig. 30, *b*). This, however, was an uncommon Blackfoot usage.

---

[66] Use of horsehide for drumheads has been reported for the Plains Cree (Mandelbaum, 1940, p. 216) and Cheyenne (Grinnell, 1923, vol. 1, p. 293). The latter preferred horsehide to other materials for drumheads.

[67] Kroeber (1907, p. 227) mentioned the use of this perfume by the neighboring Gros Ventres.

824 Travois and tipi
335 poles were made from Pinus contorta while the young
[804] trees furnished back-rest poles and bed supports. The back-rest poles were cut about five forearms in length and dried over a fire of rotten logs. One end of the pole was perforated and the other end sharpened. Then a
[531] stick was inserted through the hole and the pole etched. Later it was
[237] painted red and blue with buffalo shoulder-blade applicators. Back-rest
[211] poles were often notched to record the number of camp moves.

802 Story-sticks were prepared by older men and presented to children in
538 return for favors. The sticks were notched to count the number of stories
237 that the man would tell the child. They were often varnished with a
824 solution of boiled hoof and steer phallus and sometimes red ochre was added. Then the stick was polished with a piece of rawhide. Story-sticks were
[342] sometimes used to hang tipi doors.

[824] Wind chimes were made and presented to newly married couples. Little sticks were also prepared and notched to act as fasteners on designated foot-storage bags.

[415] Bowls were fashioned from pine burls (Fig. 35). The process was to
[237] apply grease to the burl, scrape with a rough stone, apply more grease and repeat the process until the bowl was finished. If grease was not used the bowl would crack.

[381] The resin of Pinus contorta was boiled with buffalo phallus and used as
[314] a glue for headdresses and bows. It was also applied to moccasins for
[237] waterproofing.
[274]

824 Polyporus spp.
278

This fungus was often taken from the mountains (stolen occasionally from the Kooteney Indians) or detached from willows. Then it was scraped with a knife and attached to "Weasel-robes" when it could be used in emergency first-aid treatment. It was a styptic on wounds and boiled with Psoralea

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 119]

my left. The stem was made from a branch of silverberry willow, a popular wood for making pipestems. However, the most popular pipestem wood is a species of ash that has a nice-looking straight grain, found in the country of the Crow and Sioux People. In the Old Days it was brought back to Blackfoot country by members of war parties. Today it is obtained by trade or gift, or else our People cut it themselves while visiting in that country for a powwow encampment. 276 322 [824] [137]

Before beginning the hole, I prayed that I would continue to live a straight life and that the hole in this pipestem should be evidence of whether or not I would do so successfully. If the hole should come out through the side of the stem, it would be a bad sign for me and my family. I made three passes toward the spot and then pressed the heated point against the core of the stem. As the first wire cooled off, I placed it back into the fire and took up the other one. In this way, the soft core of the stem was easy to burn through. Slowly, I turned the stem in my hand to make sure that the hot wire would burn a hole straight through. [782] [787]

Atsitsina described how holes were put through pipestems in the Old Days: "My dad said that ever since he could remember there had always been some wire around the camps, but he told me that they used to use long twigs of hardwood the same way that we use wire. Before that, in the long-ago, they must have made their pipestems the same way that I showed you to make a pipestem on a war trail—just cut a dry stick from a rose bush, or something similar, and split it in half with a knife. When it's split that way, then you can scrape the stuff out of the middle. When you put it back together, you can seal it shut with pitch or with that glue they used to make by boiling hooves, and then you can wrap wet sinew or thin buckskin all along it." [412] [412] [391] [824] [237]

A little puff of smoke from the other end of the stem signaled my success at burning through a straight hole. As soon as the stem had cooled, [412]

33: Bradley G-3 (1871-1877) 1923
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

frequently went into action entirely naked. The dress of the Blackfeet was very decent at all seasons, the body being entirely covered, the women being as sensitive to any exposure of the person as their white sisters. Little children, however, were sometimes allowed to run naked, though the girls were usually clothed as soon as they began to walk. When cotton and woolen stuffs were introduced by the traders the men took to their use quite readily, but the women were more conservative and it was long before they learned to substitute cotton or woolen for their former skin gown.

Dye Colors

The colors used in dyeing the porcupine quills, horsehair and feathers employed as trimming were red, yellow and black. The red was obtained from the bull berry, the yellow from the root of a plant, and the black apparently from pulverized lignite, of which they had an abundance in their country. These colors were prepared for use as a paint by mixing with glue obtained from the hoofs of the buffalo. With this compound they often lavishly ornamented buffalo robes, saddles, bags, lodges and shields with nude figures of people and animals. Other colors were introduced by the traders and readily adopted.

Head Covering

Neither men nor women ordinarily wore any covering on the head. For special occasions, however, the men were provided with war bonnets of elaborate workmanship. This consisted of a cap of buffalo hide, usually supporting a pair of horns jutting out from the sides in imitation of the buffalo, ornamented with feathers, porcupine quills, strips of ermine, horse hair, and frequently a long streamer hanging down behind reaching often nearly to the feet. The feathers were arranged in a row around the head, and, meeting behind, followed the streamer down the back, standing out like the teeth of a saw. The only feathers used were those of the American eagle, which were scarce and valuable; they were not dyed, but were often tipped with red horse hair streamers. The best war bonnets were very gaudy, often handsome, and were esteemed in value equal to a horse.

Another method of parfleche painting, said to have been favored by Mrs. Little Spotted Calf, a well known Blackfeet artist of more than 50 years ago, was somewhat different. She first outlined the forms with paint mixed with water, using willow sticks for straight edges. Then she filled in the outlined areas with paint, or had young people do it for her. Meanwhile the tail of a beaver was boiling in water nearby until it made a sticky glue. She took another bone brush with no paint on it, dipped it in the glue, marked along the painted areas with it, and finally covered all the painted masses with a thin coat of the glue. The glue made the paint shine and remain permanent. One could pour water over it after the glue dried and the paint would not run. The clean second scrapings of hides were sometimes substituted for the beaver tail in making the glue overcoat. It is said that after the Blackfeet obtained rice from the Whites, they made a sticky glue of it that furnished another substitute for beaver tail glue.

In either case, after the paint dried, the hide was turned over and the hair removed with a hide scraper or a rock. Pounding the outside of the hide with a rock made the unpainted portions of the rawhide a whitish color. Then the woman cut out the parfleches to the desired shape with a knife, folded them into their proper envelope form, and burned out the tie holes with a hot iron rod. The parfleches were finished.

Areas of the hide not needed for parfleches were not wasted. They were used for making smaller painted cases of rectangular shape, or cut up into moccasin soles.

Blackfeet parfleches average 2 feet long by 15 inches wide when folded for use. They are somewhat shorter than those of most other Plains tribes. In the old days they were used primarily for holding pemmican or dried meat. The painted designs are confined primarily to the two end flaps, secondarily to the longer, narrower, side flaps. In contrast with some other tribes, such as the Dakota, Blackfeet parfleches generally

[P.17-A]